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C O N F I D E N T I A L BUENOS AIRES 002320

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SUBJECT: NEW SECURITY MINISTER STAYS THE COURSE, MOSTLY

REF: BUENOS AIRES 02152

Classified By: Ambassador Lino Gutierrez for reason 1.4 (B) AND (D).

1. (C) SUMMARY: Less than two weeks after assuming office, Justice Minister Horacio Daniel Rosatti presented four domestic security initiatives to the Senate initially proposed by his predecessor Gustavo Beliz, indicating that the recent change in leadership at the Ministry will not affect the GOA's general security strategy. Rosatti chose to put forward four of the less controversial elements of his predecessor's more sweeping security package, avoiding for the moment more problematic issues, such as lowering the minimum age for prosecution and judicial reforms opposed by members of the Federal Judiciary. END SUMMARY.

2. (C) On August 4, the new Justice and Security Minister, Horacio Daniel Rosatti, pushed forward in the Senate elements of the former Justice Minister Beliz's high profile security plan. Security remains a hot button issue with voters, and President Kirchner and his new justice team will continue to push the agenda forward, however, in a more cautious manner than Rosatti's predecessor. With the dismissal of Beliz, there was a great deal of speculation that the GOA would scrap all or a majority of the sweeping security reform program. Beliz had presented the bill to Congress under pressure from anti-crime activists and mass protests led by Juan Carlos Blumberg, the father of a victim in a high profile kidnap/murder case that has galvanized the Argentine society on the issue of security.

3. (C) Soon after taking office Rosatti intimated in the media that he would examine each part of the proposed legislation, causing a great deal of rumor regarding the possibility of a major shift in the GOA's security strategy. The following day the GOA held a press conference emphasizing that President Kirchner had changed Justice Ministers, but not his commitment or focus on the proposed security reforms. The passing of four parts of the old security plan by the Senate sends a clear message that the GOA has not drastically changed its policy.

4. (C) The security initiatives passed by the Senate allow changes in the legal code to: authorize authorities to reduce sentences for all types of crimes for individuals who assist in investigations; increase the maximum sentence for embezzlement convictions from two to six years; provide prosecutors with increased flexibility to void minor or petty criminal cases without prosecution; and, to restrict parole for convicts where there is a fear the person may become a repeat offender. As with other recent legislative initiatives, the Kirchner Administration brought the initiatives up for a vote in the Senate before presenting them in the more contentious Lower House. The initiatives were among the more non-controversial items included in the old security package, and received wide support among both Peronist and Radical Senators. Many other more contentious issues dealing with a wide range of issues including the lowering of the age for prosecution and limiting the power of federal judges remain on hold. There is, as yet, no indication when the Administration plans to move these initiatives forward in the Lower House.

3. (C) COMMENT: Per reftel, Post views Kirchner's decision to replace Beliz as not related to the former Minister's vision or work in the area of security reform, but as a result of a growing personality conflict between the two individuals. In choosing to pursue the initiatives individually, as opposed to as a part of a giant security reform package, Rosatti has changed the tactics but not the direction of the Ministry. It is unclear when or if Rosatti will pursue the more contentious provisions of the Beliz plan such as those dealing with limiting the authority of Federal Prosecutors and Judges. Post does not believe the change in personnel will greatly alter the GOA's domestic security objectives, or post's ability to work effectively with the Justice Ministry. END COMMENT.
GUTIERREZ